

Summary: International review of registered nurse prescribing competencies and implications for New Zealand proposed standards of competence for the registered nurse prescriber (pou seven)

Purpose

This summary outlines the work undertaken to review international standards of competence for registered nurse (RN) prescribing and explains how this work has informed the development of the proposed New Zealand draft standards of competence set out in pou seven. The review was wide-reaching and ensured the proposed standards are evidence informed, internationally aligned, and appropriate for the New Zealand regulatory context.

Work undertaken

A comprehensive comparative review was conducted of RN prescribing competency frameworks across selected international jurisdictions with comparable health systems and regulatory approaches. Jurisdictions reviewed included:

- New Zealand (existing primary health and specialty teams prescribing and RN prescribing in community health frameworks)
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- Ireland
- Canada (Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan)

For each jurisdiction, the review considered:

- The level and scope of RN prescribing
- The standards or competencies underpinning prescribing practice
- How competencies are set and governed by regulatory authorities
- Approaches to maintaining and assuring ongoing prescribing competence



The International Council of Nurses (ICN) Guidelines on Prescriptive Authority for Nurses (2021) were also included in the review along with an examination of pharmacy, podiatrist and the proposed paramedic prescribing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This work enabled identification of shared principles, areas of divergence, and emerging international trends in prescribing regulation.

Key international findings

Despite differences in presentation and regulatory structures, the review demonstrated strong international consistency in expectations for safe and effective prescribing by RNs. Key findings include:

- **Common core prescribing process:** All jurisdictions align around a person-centred prescribing pathway that includes assessment, consideration of treatment options, shared decision-making, prescribing, and monitoring and review.
- **Interdisciplinary approaches:** The UK and Australia, and increasingly New Zealand, use interdisciplinary prescribing competency frameworks or principles applicable across health professions, reflecting shared accountability for prescribing safety.
- **Professional practice and governance:** All frameworks incorporate professional, ethical, and governance requirements alongside clinical prescribing competencies.
- **Flexible competence assurance:** Most jurisdictions do not prescribe fixed clinical hour requirements within competency frameworks. Instead, competence is assured through approved education pathways, supervised practice, continuing professional development, and regulatory oversight.
- **Strong regulatory stewardship:** Prescribing competence is consistently positioned as a regulated extension of RN practice, with clear responsibility held by regulatory authorities for public protection.

Implications for New Zealand draft standards (pou seven)

The international analysis directly informed the development of pou seven in the following ways:

- The draft standards reflect internationally recognised prescribing domains and processes, ensuring alignment with best practice in comparable jurisdictions.
- Person-centred prescribing competencies are integrated with professional and governance expectations, consistent with international frameworks.
- The standards are principle based and adaptable, supporting current and future RN prescribing roles across all settings.



- The approach aligns with existing New Zealand regulatory frameworks and interdisciplinary prescribing principles, while remaining responsive to the New Zealand health system and population needs.

Conclusion

The international review provides robust assurance that the proposed New Zealand standards of competence for the RN prescriber (pou seven) are grounded in international best practice, aligned with global regulatory trends, and fit for purpose in the New Zealand context. The standards support safe, effective, and equitable prescribing while enabling the continued evolution of registered nurse practice in response to health system needs.

References

- Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. (2022). *National Medicines Policy* 2022. <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-12/national-medicines-policy.pdf>
- Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. (2025). National Prescribing Competencies Framework: Embedding quality use of medicines into practice. <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/Our-engagement-activities/National-Prescribing-Competencies-Framework.aspx>
- Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council. (2025). *ANMAC Registered Nurse Prescribing Accreditation Standards 2025*. <https://anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/Registered%20Nurse%20Prescribing%20Accreditation%20Standards%202025.pdf>
- College of Nurses of Ontario. (2023). *Registered Nurse (RN) Prescribing*. <https://cno.org/Assets/CNO/Documents/Standard-and-Learning/Practice-Standards/practice-standards-rn-prescribing.pdf>
- College of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2022). *Registered Nurse Prescribing Schedule 1 Drugs and Ordering Diagnostic Tests: Requirements and Standards*. <https://www.nurses.ab.ca/media/p2ajy001/registered-nurse-prescribing-schedule-1-drugs-and-ordering-diagnostic-tests-guidelines-2022.pdf>
- College of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2025). *Nursing Education Program Approval Standards*. <https://www.nurses.ab.ca/media/e1ndrufs/nepa-requirements-standards-and-criteria-june-2025-final.pdf>
- College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan. (2026). *Prescribing medication guideline*. <https://www.crns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Guideline-for-Prescribing-Medication.pdf>



- International Council of Nurses. (2021). *Guidelines on prescriptive authority for nurses*.
https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2023-04/ICN_Nurse_prescribing_guidelines_EN.pdf
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. (2015). *Prescriptive Authority for Nurses and Midwives*.
<https://www.nmbi.ie/NMBI/media/NMBI/Prescriptive-Authority-for-Nurses-and-Midwives.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. (2019). *Practice Standards and Guidelines for Nurses and Midwives with Prescriptive Authority (4th edition)*.
https://www.nmbi.ie/NMBI/media/NMBI/NMBI_Practice-StandardsGuidelines_07102019.pdf?ext=.pdf
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society. (2021). *A Competency Framework for all Prescribers*.
<https://www.rpharms.com/Portals/0/RPS%20document%20library/Open%20access/Prescribing%20Competency%20Framework/RPS%20English%20Competency%20Framework%203.pdf?ver=mctnrKo4YajDh2nA8N5G3A%3d%3d>
- Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa Nursing Council of New Zealand. (2016). *Competencies for nurse prescribers*.
<https://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/common/Uploaded%20files/Public/Nursing/Nurse%20prescribing/Competencies%20for%20nurse%20prescribers%20August%202016.pdf>
- Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa Nursing Council of New Zealand. (2024a). *Competencies for nurse prescribers*. https://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/NCNZ/nursing-section/Registered_nurse_prescribing_in_primary_health_and_specialty_teams.aspx
- Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa Nursing Council of New Zealand. (2024b). *Principles for quality and safe prescribing practice*. [file:///C:/Users/jclendon/Downloads/NCNZ004-Medicines-Sept-2024-FINAL-2024-09-17%20\(5\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/jclendon/Downloads/NCNZ004-Medicines-Sept-2024-FINAL-2024-09-17%20(5).pdf)

